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**EL DORADO COUNTY MAN PLEADS GUILTY TO FEDERAL
CHILD PORNOGRAPHY CHARGES**

SACRAMENTO--United States Attorney McGregor W. Scott announced today that Michael Pitts, 27, of El Dorado County, pleaded guilty today to 2 counts of possessing images depicting minors engaged in sexually explicit conduct. The guilty pleas were entered in federal court before Senior United States District Judge Lawrence K. Karlton, and were in accordance with the terms of a written plea agreement with the government. The Indictment charging Pitts alleged that between September 1, 2002 and November 22, 2002, and again on October 2, 2003, Pitts knowingly possessed computer hard drives which contained visual depictions of minors engaged in sexually explicit conduct which were produced using materials that had been mailed, shipped, and transported in interstate commerce, and which visual depictions were transported and shipped in interstate commerce. In a third count, the indictment also sought the forfeiture of the computer equipment Pitts used to possess the child pornography. Under the terms of the plea agreement, Pitts entered guilty pleas to both possession charges and agreed to forfeit the computer equipment he used in furtherance of his crimes.

This case was the product of a joint investigation by the El Dorado County Sheriff's Department and the Federal Bureau of Investigation in Sacramento.

According to Assistant United States Attorney Laurel White, who is prosecuting the case, in late October 2002, computers belonging to Pitts were seized by the El Dorado County Sheriff's Department because of allegations they contained child pornography. When the computers were analyzed they were found to contain more than 20,000 images of nude and scantily clothed girls. At least 69 of the images depicted minors engaged in sexually explicit conduct. Pitts was charged by the El Dorado County District Attorney's office for his possession of those images.

Then in late September, early October, 2003, Pitts became a suspect in the kidnapping of a 9-year old girl in the Pollack Pines area of El Dorado County. Pitts' El Dorado County residence was once again searched and another computer belonging to him was seized. While conducting the search, officers observed that there was equipment for a laptop computer in Pitts room, but no laptop. The FBI later contacted a friend of Pitts who informed agents that Pitts had left a laptop and some personal documents with him about October 3, 2003. Agents retrieved

the laptop which was found to contain approximately 1,250 images depicting minors engaged in sexually explicit conduct. Among the sexually explicit images possessed by Pitts were images produced in Brazil, England and other locations outside California. Several of the children depicted were identified as known victims of child sexual abuse. With the discovery of Pitts new collection of child pornography, El Dorado County authorities decided to refer their 2002 case to the United States Attorney's office for prosecution.

Pitts faces a maximum sentence of 5 years imprisonment, a \$250,000 fine, and \$100 statutory assessment for his possession of sexually explicit images in 2002. Because of a change in the law, the maximum sentence for his 2003 possession of sexually explicit images of minors, is 10 years in prison, a \$250,000 fine, a \$100 statutory assessment, and potential life term of supervised release. Pitts is scheduled to be sentenced on the federal charges on October 5, 2004.

State charges relating to the October, 2003 kidnaping, are pending in El Dorado County.

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